

Waltham St Lawrence Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 109832 |
| Local Authority | Windsor and Maidenhead |
| Inspection number | 310115 |
| Inspection dates | 8–9 November 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Charalambos Loizou |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 5–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 100 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr R James |
| Headteacher | Mrs J Jeffries |
| Date of previous school inspection | 22 March 2004 |
| School address | School Road West End Waltham St Lawrence Reading RG10 0NU |
| Telephone number | 01189 343248 |
| Fax number | 01189 343248 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school situated in a generally advantaged rural area, although a significant minority of pupils come from outside the immediate locality. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Children in the Reception year join the school in the term of their fifth birthday and are taught in a class with Year 1 pupils. Two of the other five classes in the school are of mixed age. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average, although the proportion with statements of special educational needs is larger than that of most schools. The school achieved national recognition as a Healthy School and received its Investors in People award last year.

Key for inspection grades

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| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Waltham St. Lawrence is a good school. Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Good leadership, management and governance, and well-devised staff training, have led to very good improvements since the school's last inspection. The quality of teaching is consistently good. It is particularly effective in mathematics because pupils reach high standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils enjoy school very much. This is not surprising because the staff provide an outstanding curriculum. This is having a positive effect on the pupils' excellent personal development and behaviour.

There are very strong links with parents and the local community. The large majority of parents are pleased with the school. 'It has a wonderful caring atmosphere', 'we are delighted to have access to such a valuable educational resource in the community', are just two of the many tributes expressed. Pupils, too, are enthusiastic and as one commented, 'It's great because you learn so many different things like French, music and computer work'.

Staff and governors have accurately assessed all aspects of the school's work, although they recognise that pupils should be doing better in writing. A good start has been made since the staff introduced a consistent method for teaching phonics. This led to improvements to English standards, although pupils' performance in writing is relatively weaker compared with reading.

Teachers and the skilled support staff take good care of the pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities. The staff ensure that pupils are safe from harm or harassment. One pupil commented, 'We like school because it is small and is easy to make friends or find someone to help you'. Assessment is used well to monitor standards, although staff and governors are not checking pupils' progress often enough to see if all are on course to reach their targets.

Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of the different ages and abilities in each class. The excellent focus on healthy living encourages pupils to participate in a very good range of activities, including the 'keeping healthy project'. Creative and expressive arts are incorporated very well into lessons and special themed weeks making learning interesting and fun. The recent ECO week involved surveys, walks and visits that helped pupils to learn about environmental issues and as one said, 'It taught us to conserve resources'. An excellent range of experiences broaden the pupils' knowledge of different cultures and customs, like learning to play the Balinese gamelan or studying music through the ages in the 'baroque to rock' experience led by a visiting specialist. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 provided enthusiastic accounts of their performance of their own scripts of 'Romeo and Juliet' as part of a festival of Shakespeare with other schools, 'I was really scared at first, but after checking our lines I was alright and it was great fun being on stage', said one. The local area is used as a valuable resource with many classes undertaking village surveys, even investigating a local borehole as a source of water. Parents are supportive and the parent teacher association organised the development of the school garden and pond area, which supports pupils' environmental studies and science work. The broad range of skills and knowledge learned in lessons and at other times prepare the pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Governors are effective and are a credit to the school. The staff are innovative and energetic in seeking to improve and the school's capacity to keep on improving is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Reception year make good progress in all areas of learning. Stimulating indoor and outdoor experiences and good teaching help them to reach the learning goals expected of five-year-olds. Children are encouraged to explain what they are doing and so make good progress developing speaking and listening skills. They solve problems when sorting materials into different groups and make good progress developing early information and communication technology (ICT) skills using computers, cameras and recording devices. The skilled teaching of letter sounds successfully develop the children's early reading skills, although they make slower progress in writing. There is an effective balance of welfare and care so children quickly settle into routines. They develop good attitudes and behave extremely well. The staff take good account of parents' views and provide excellent profiles of children's work for parents. The staff are constantly vigilant, ensuring that the children work and play safely.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the teaching has a greater impact on accelerating pupils' progress in writing to raise standards.
- Improve assessment systems so that the staff make more regular checks of the pupils' performance to ensure that all pupils are on course to reach their targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When Reception children first join the school there is a wide range of ability. Overall, they start with levels of knowledge and skills that are in line with most five-year-olds. The small numbers taking national tests in some years means that there needs to be caution in interpreting results from a single year. However, over a period of several years standards are improving well across the school and are above average in reading, mathematics and science, but average in writing. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points. Despite this, there is still room for improvement in writing, where pupils make slower progress developing independent writing skills. The teaching is successful in helping the pupils to do well in mathematics and this is reflected in the high standards achieved in national tests in Year 6. Test results also show that some pupils do not reach their expected targets, reflecting some inconsistencies in the use of assessment. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress because they receive consistently good support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables them to develop very positive approaches to learning. They form excellent relationships and behave extremely well. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in good attendance rates. Pupils represent the views of others very well as school councillors and show initiative when looking after younger pupils at break-times. Pupils feel safe and their efforts are valued. This is evident in the compilation of extracts, prepared by governors, of the views of past pupils, which portray the many fond memories of pupils' experiences of school. Pupils adopt very healthy eating habits and are encouraged to be active in sports and during break-times. They play an excellent part in their local community through charitable fund-raising and church festivals. Well-planned assemblies

help them to reflect or think of others, as in the recent national remembrance commemoration. Pupils learn about other cultures through drama and special workshops, for example, their experience of Caribbean and Calypso music, or when learning about traditional South American tales during the 'Brazil project'. Pupils develop a good understanding of information and communication technology (ICT) skills that prepares them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan their lessons carefully to meet the needs of pupils in both single and mixed-age classes. Very positive relationships create a positive learning environment. Teaching assistants are particularly skilled in supporting pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Teachers provide a good balance of direct instruction and opportunities for pupils to practice their skills through investigation and problem solving. This was seen to very good effect in an excellent mathematics lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6 when the teacher helped the pupils to investigate how best to describe the pattern formed by a set of numbers using algebra. In another excellent English lesson, pupils in Years 5 and 6 in a different class were absorbed in the task of organising and editing a biographical account of their teacher. Throughout the school, tasks such as role-play and drama are used well to encourage pupils to express themselves and to extend their thinking by sharing ideas with others. Teachers mark pupils' work diligently and provide targets for improvement, although assessments of the pupils' performance are not consistent enough to see if pupils are on course to reach their targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

An extensive range of enrichment is provided that includes the creative arts, sport, visits and visitors. Personal, social and health education is promoted extremely well when the staff link National Curriculum subjects with special topics or themed weeks. There is a strong emphasis on the creative curriculum and this is reflected in the high standard of pupils' artwork displayed around the school, including art and sculptures inspired by the work of famous artists. The performing arts and music are used very well to widen pupils' experiences. This is enhanced by visits, including an annual residential visit to the Isle of Wight. There are excellent links with the church and local village. Pupils regularly use the local area, for example, Year 2 pupils improved their geography and mathematics skills when surveying the local area and charting the modes of transport used from home to school. Pupils develop and improve their ICT skills well and this has been a significant improvement since the school's last inspection.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides strong pastoral support and care, and good guidance. The staff are vigilant so pupils feel safe and settled in school. Very good attention is paid to child protection and to systematic risk assessments of activities and resources. For example, the exciting outdoor playground equipment is regularly checked to ensure that floor areas are clean and safe for pupils to use. Assessment and marking are used quite well to help pupils understand the next steps in their learning. Individual targets pasted into pupils' workbooks also help pupils to

check their progress. However, teachers are not always making regular checks of pupils' performance to analyse what steps are needed to ensure that all pupils reach their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, assistant headteacher and governors work as an effective team. Their accurate assessment of the school's work and performance has helped to identify the right priorities for improvement. These also incorporate the views of pupils, parents and staff. The headteacher has provided determined leadership since the last inspection. Effective and systematic monitoring and development of teaching has guided very good improvements to standards and the teaching. Despite this, more is needed to ensure that target setting is consistent across the school in order to sustain improvements to standards and to provide challenging targets for all pupils. Governors hold the school to account well and provide good support. There are effective systems in place to ensure that they monitor the school's performance. Governors and parents contribute greatly to the life of the school. Resources are of very good quality and excellent improvements to resources for ICT are used very well to support pupils' learning across the curriculum.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Waltham St Lawrence Primary School, Reading, RG10 0NU

I was very pleased to visit your school. You made me feel really welcome. I think that you go to a good school. You all work very hard with your teachers and I agree with the many parents who say that your school is a fun place to learn and play. Your art work is fantastic and I was very impressed with many different things that have happened since your school was last inspected. There are many good things about your school and it is hard for me to pick out the very best. These are just a few of the things I was pleased with most.

- You are extremely well behaved, polite and considerate.
- Your teachers and support staff are good at helping you to reach good standards.
- You enjoy school and I can see why because there are lots of things for you to do.
- I really enjoyed the assembly, your singing, prayers and the Year 5 and 6 drama scripts of 'Romeo and Juliet', well done!
- I was very impressed with the school council and how it helps to improve the school.
- Your parents are very pleased with you and your teachers and the school works very closely with them.
- The headteacher, staff and governors manage the school well and work hard to keep looking for ways to make the school even better.

I have asked your teachers to:

- help you all do even better in writing
- make regular checks on how well you are all doing so that you all reach your targets.

Well done and I wish you all the very best.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou

Lead Inspector